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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us - Kerry Sullivan champions legislation for insurance-paid hearing aids

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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Winchester resident Kerry Sullivan is supporting legislation to have hearing aids covered by insurers.
WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Old Lyme Road resident Kerry Sullivan is trying to get the state t health insurers to pay for hearing aids.

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“I’ve had a hearing loss since childhood from no known cause,” she says. “As a child, I would lip read and sit at the front of the classroom, and copy friends notes.

“But as an adult, work meetings and speaker phones were a problem and I started to fall apart,” she continues. “I had to get past my denial (which is common among the hearing disabled) and finally got hearing aids when I was in my 20s. I still felt like it was a stigma to wear them. But not anymore.”

Sullivan worked in the competitive financial services industry and says she spent a lot of nights reading to learn more about her job issues.

PHOTO COURTESY HLAA

In 2016, she attended the Hearing Loss Association of America HLAA conference in St. Lake City. She went with her mother, who suffered a hearing loss after getting a laser treatment for an acoustic neuroma.

“At the conference I saw people I respected who were sharp, both visually and professionally — they didn’t let their disability interfere with their lives,” she says. “There was a lot of ‘knowledge transfer,’ more than I got from my doctor or the audiologist because they don’t have a hearing loss.

“A conference attendee suggested I join the Boston chapter and I [illegible] getting the short straw,” she jokes, which is how she got elected president.

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“Zoom totally changed my world,” Sullivan adds, “especially once they added captions.”

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Fundraising is a big part of her “job,” she adds.

“Last year, on Giving Tuesday, we got $100. Our expenses aren’t large unless we have to get a human ‘captioner’ for our meetings, the term we use for someone who adds captions in real time,” Sullivan says. “There’s a shortage of them and we pay $400 for them to do the captions. We also occasionally hire an American Sign Language translator.

“But in 2024, we did a 5K ‘Walk4Hearing’ in Boston and raised $2,400,” Sullivan adds. “We fund scholarships so people can attend the HLAA conference. This year the walk will be on Oct. 5.”

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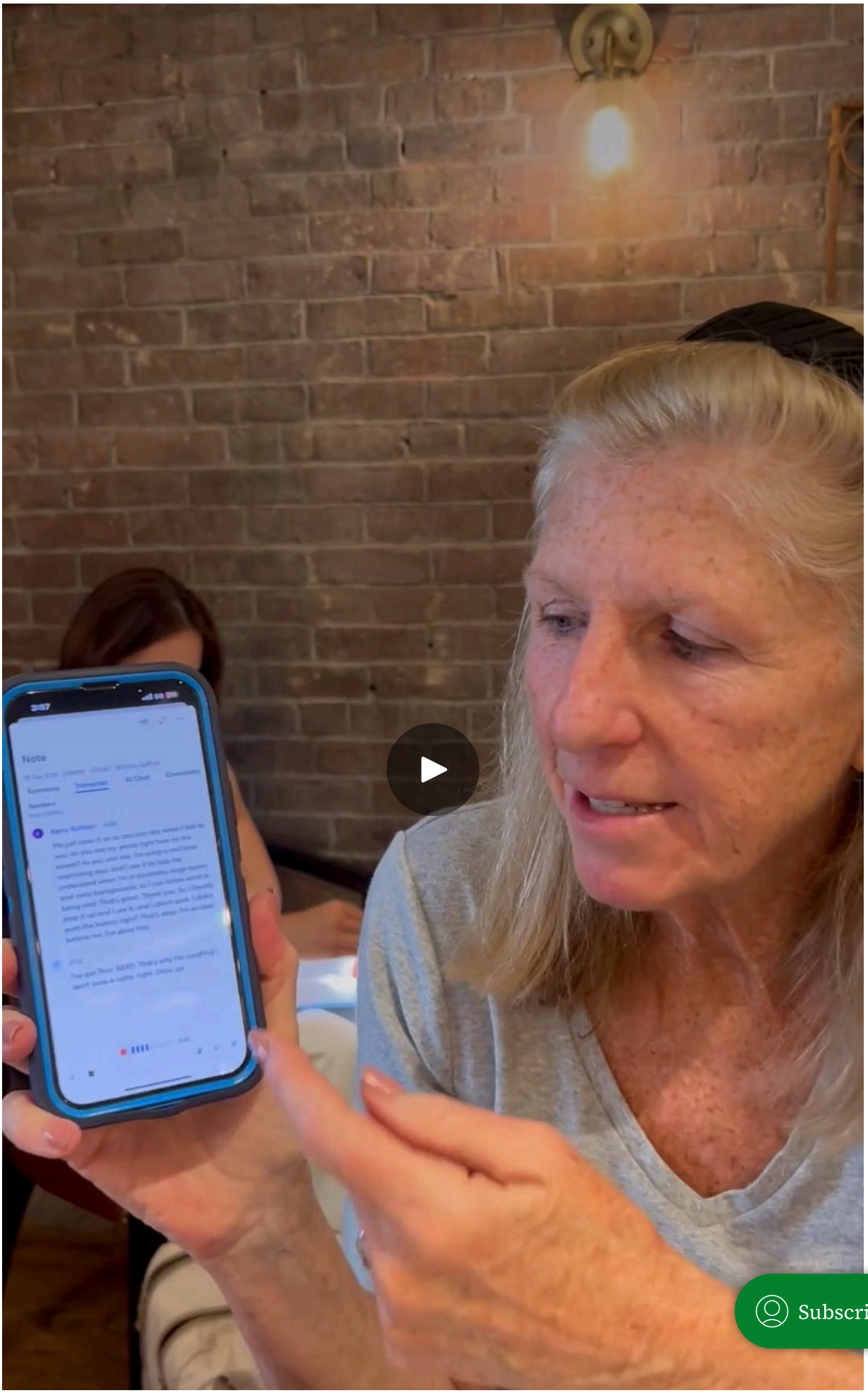
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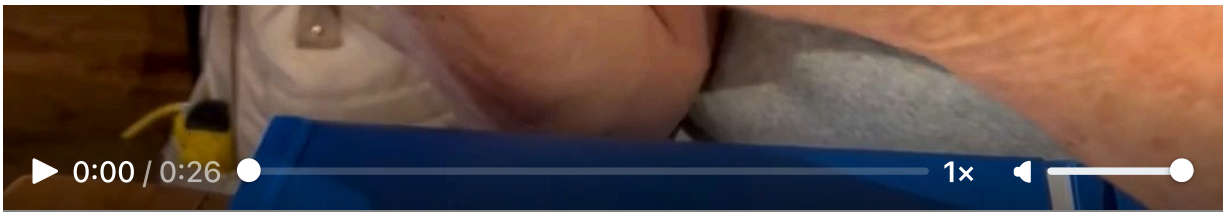

Kerry Sullivan demonstrates an app. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF VIDEO/JOYCE WESTNER

As for the state legislation, Sullivan supports House Bill H3946. When she testified at a September hearing, she pointed out that about 13% of Americans have some kind of hearing loss, and more than half of them are working adults or children. But only about 30% of them wear hearing aids, "with cost being the largest barrier.

"Five states mandate private insurance coverage for adults, including Connecticut, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, so why not Massachusetts?" she asked the committee.

And, she points out, the cost in Massachusetts would be about $60k each year.

During the interview, Sullivan demonstrates her smartphone apps, which help folks with hearing loss, and says she'd be happy to help people learn to use them. Her email address is on the HLAA local chapter webpage.

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Helpers Among Us - WinPAC unites with light

On a cold and blustery day, two post-graduate Winchester High School students and others stood outside the Stop & Shop inviting folks to buy luminary kits as part of the Unite with Light event planned for Sunday, Dec. 14. The successful program was started by Mairin Norton, a high-schooler who

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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us - Alisa Dong needs your help with Thanksgiving food drive

Standish Lane resident Alisa Dong has only lived in town for about four years, but she's already immersed in helping people. And she wants residents to help her provide Thanksgiving Day meals for local food-insecure residents. A member of the town's Family Action Network (FAN), Dong is its

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Helpers Among Us — Coaches volunteer to bring on the cheer

You probably know that cheerleaders appear at sporting events to cheer on their teams, but you might not know that cheerleading is a sport in its own right. Or that Winchester

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Helpers Among Us - Patti Reilly wants your children's clothes

Although Patti Reilly opened her boutique, Jules, about a year and a ha... already discovered the gene... Winchester residents. That's why she and her

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Cheer coaches volunteer to help girls and boys learn and compete in cheerleading. Middlesex Street resident Erin Black is

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husband, John, decided to offer a 10% discount on one item to anyone who brings in “gently used children’s clothing.

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Latest

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester’s School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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FEATURES

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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